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CHRISTMAS IN POETRY

CAROLS AND POEMS

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SECOND SERIES

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CONTENTS

Ancient Christmas Carol 20

Aunt Mary: A Cornish Christmas Chant 30
Robert Stephen Hawker

Carol 22
Langdon E. Mitchell

Carol for the Twelfth Day 42
Old English Carol

Catch by the Hearth 1

Child's Prayer 28
Francis Thompson

Christmas Carol 33
Phillips Brooks

Christmas Carol 24
Gilbert K. Chesterton

Christmas Carol 27
Thomas Helmore

Christmas Eve 21
Eugene Field

Christmas in the Heart 39

Christmas Legend 13
Frank Sidgwick

Christmas Song 38
Lydia Avery Coonley Ward

Christmas Tree in the Nursery 40
Richard Watson Gilder

Christmas Trees 31
Mary F. Butts

Feast o' St. Stephen 8
Ruth Sawyer

First Christmas 25
Emilie Poulsson

Joseph, Jesus and Mary 9
From a Gypsy Carol

Legend 10
Tschaikovsky

Long Long Ago 23

March of the Three Kings 15
Old Provençal Carol

New Prince, New Pomp 26
Robert Southwell

Now Thrice Welcome Christmas 4
Poor Richard's Almanack 1695

O Little Town of Bethlehem 17
Phillips Brooks

Old Christmas 5

Old Christmas Returned 6
Old English Carol

Shepherd Boys 19
Provençal Nöel of Nicholas Saboly
Sing, Sing for Christmas 36
J. H. Egar
Singers in the Snow 2
Somersetshire Wassail 7
Song of the Christmas Tree 32
Blanche Elizabeth Wade
Stocking Song on Christmas Eve 35
Mary Mapes Dodge
When the Christ Child Came 11
Frederick E. Weatherly
While Stars of Christmas Shine 34
Emilie Poulsson

A CATCH BY THE HEARTH

Sing we all merrily
Christmas is here,
The day that we love best
Of days in the year.

Bring forth the holly,
The box, and the bay,
Deck out our cottage
For glad Christmas-day.

Sing we all merrily,
Draw around the fire,
Sister and brother,
Grandson and sire.

Unknown.

THE SINGERS IN THE SNOW

God bless the master of this house
And all that are therein,
And to begin the Christmas tide
With mirth now let us sing.
For the Saviour of all the people
Upon this time was born,
Who did from death deliver us,
When we were left forlorn.

Then let us all most merry be,
And sing with cheerful voice,
For we have good occasion now
This time for to rejoice.
For, etc.

Then put away contention all
And fall no more at strife,
Let every man with cheerfullness
Embrace his loving wife.
For, etc.

With plenteous food your houses store,
Provide some wholesome cheer,
And call your friends together,
That live both far and near.
For, etc.

Then let us all most merry be,
Since that we are come here,
And we do hope before we part
To taste some of your beer.
For, etc.

Your beer, your beer, your Christmas beer,
That seems to be so strong;
And we do wish that Christmas tide
Was twenty times so long.
For, etc.

Then sing with voices cheerfully,
For Christ this time was born,
Who did from death deliver us,
When we were left forlorn.
For, etc.
Old English Carol.

NOW THRICE WELCOME CHRISTMAS

Now thrice welcome Christmas,
Which brings us good-cheer,
Minced pies and plum-porridge,
Good ale and strong beer;
With pig, goose, and capon,
The best that can be,
So well doth the weather
And our stomachs agree.

Observe how the chimneys
Do smoke all about,
The cooks are providing
For dinner no doubt;
But those on whose tables
No victuals appear,
O may they keep Lent
All the rest of the year!

With holly and ivy
So green and so gay,
We deck up our houses
As fresh as the day,
With bays and rosemary,
And laurel complete,
And everyone now
Is a king in conceit.

Poor Robin's Almanack, 1695

OLD CHRISTMAS

All you that in his house be here,
Remember Christ that for us dy'd,
And spend away with modest cheere
In loving sort this Christmas-tide.

And whereas plenty God hath sent,
Give frankly to your friends in love:
The bounteous mind is freely bent,
And never will a niggard prove.

Our table's spread within the hall,
I know a banquet is at hand,
And friendly sort to welcome all
That will unto their cacklings stand.

The maids are bonny girles, I see,
Who have provided much good cheere,
Which at my dame's commandment be
To set it on the table here.

For I have here two knives in store
To lend to him that wanteth one;
Commend my wits, good lads, therefore,
That come now hither having none.

For if I should, no Christmas pye
Would fall, I doubt, unto my share;
Wherefore I will my manhood try
To fight a battle if I dare.

For pastry crust, like castle walls,
Stands braving me unto my face;
I am not well until it falls,
And I made captain of the place.

The prunes so lovely look on me,
I cannot choose but venture on:
One pye-meat spiced brave I see,
One which, I must not leave alone.

Old English Carol.

OLD CHRISTMAS RETURNED

All you that to feasting and mirth are inclined,
Come here is good news for to pleasure your mind,
Old Christmas is come for to keep open house,
He scorns to be guilty of starving a mouse:
Then come, boys, and welcome for diet the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minced pies, and roast beef.

The holly and ivy about the walls wind
And show that we ought to our neighbors be kind,
Inviting each other for pastime and sport,
And where we best fare, there we most do resort;
We fail not of victuals, and that of the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minced pies, and roast beef.

All travellers, as they do pass on their way,
At gentlemen's halls are invited to stay,
Themselves to refresh, and their horses to rest,
Since that he must be Old Christmas's guest;
Nay, the poor shall not want, but have for relief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minced pies, and roast beef.

Old English Carol.

WASSAIL SONG

Wassail! wassail! all round the town,
For the cup is white and the ale is brown,
For it's our wassail, and 'tis your wassail,
And 'tis joy come to our jolly wassail!

The cup is made of the ashen tree,
And the ale is made of the best barley,
For it's our wassail, and 'tis your wassail,
And 'tis joy come to our jolly wassail!

O maid, fair maid in Holland smock,
Come ope the door and turn the lock,
For it's our wassail, and 'tis your wassail,
And 'tis joy come to our jolly wassail!

O master, mistress, that sit by the fire,
Consider us poor travellers all in the mire.
For it's our wassail, and 'tis your wassail,
And 'tis joy come to our jolly wassail!

Put out the ale and raw milk cheese,
And then you shall see how happy we be's,
For it's our wassail, and 'tis your wassail,
And 'tis joy come to our jolly wassail!

Old Somersetshire Carol.

FEAST O' ST. STEPHEN

Listen all ye, 'tis the Feast o' St. Stephen,
Mind that ye keep it, this holy even.
Open your door and greet ye the stranger,
For ye mind that the wee Lord had naught but a manger.
Mhuire as truagh!

Feed ye the hungry and rest ye the weary,
This ye must do for the sake of Our Mary.
'Tis well that ye mind—ye who sit by the fire—
That the Lord He was born in a dark and cold byre.
Mhuire as truagh!

Ruth Sawyer

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JOSEPH, JESUS AND MARY

Joseph, Jesus and Mary
    Were travelling for the west,
When Mary grew a-tired,
    She might sit down and rest.

They travelled further and further,
    The weather being so warm,
Till they came unto a husbandman
    A-sowing of his corn.

"Come, husbandman," cried Jesus,
    "Throw all your seed aside,
And carry home as ripened corn
    That you have sowed this tide.

"For to keep your wife and family
    From sorrow, grief and pain,
And keep Christ in remembrance
    Till seed time comes again."

From a Gypsy Carol

A LEGEND

Christ, when a child, a garden made,
And many roses flourished there,
He watered them three times a day,
To make a garland for his hair.

And when in time the roses bloomed
He called the children in to share;
They tore the flowers from every stem
And left the garden stript and bare.

"How wilt thou weave thyself a crown
Now that thy roses all are dead?"
"Ye have forgotten that the thorns
Are left for me," the Christ-child said.

They plaited then a crown of thorns
And laid it rudely on his head.
A garland for his forehead made
For roses drops of blood instead.

Tschaikovsky

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WHEN THE CHRIST CHILD CAME

'Twas Christmas Eve, the snow
Lay deep upon the ground,
The peasants' fire burnt low,
The children shivered round.

Their scanty evening meal,
Lay on the humble board,
But all, with thankful hearts,
Arose and blessed the Lord.

Hark! someone knocks without,
The peasant opens the door—
Who wanders late to-night
Across the bitter moor?

Amid the winter storm
There in the dark He stands,
A Child with wistful eyes
And frozen, lifted hands.

The peasant took him in,
The children wond'ring gaze—
He wiped away the snows,
And warmed Him by the blaze.

There on the seat they loved,
The dear, dead mother's chair,
They broke the bread and gave,
Each of his scanty share.

But while on beds of straw
That night they sleeping lay,
The Child arose and blessed them,
And softly went His way.

Now for each good that comes,
When life seems doubly drear,
They fold their hands and say,
"The Christ Child hath been here."

Frederick E. Weatherly

ncluded by permission of the author.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

Abroad on a winter's night there ran
Under the starlight, leaping the rills
Swollen with snow-drip from the hills,
Goat-legged, goat-bearded Pan.

He loved to run on the crisp white floor,
Where black hill-torrents chiselled grooves,
And he loved to print his clean-cut hooves,
Where none had trod before.

And now he slacked and came to a stand
Beside a river too broad to leap;
And as he panted he heard a sheep
That bleated near at hand.

"Bell-wether, bell-wether, what do you say?
Peace, and huddle your ewes from cold!"
"Master, but ere we went to fold
Our herdsman hastened away:

"Over the hill came other twain
And pointed away to Bethlehem,
And spake with him, and he followed them,
And has not come again.

"He dropped his pipe of the river-reed;
He left his scrip in his haste to go;
And all our grazing is under snow,
So that we cannot feed."

"Left his sheep on a winter's night?"—
Pan folded them with an angry frown.
"Bell-wether, bell-wether, I'll go down
Where the star shines bright."

Down by the hamlet he met the man.
"Shepherd, no shepherd, thy flock is lorn!"
"Master, no master, a child is born
Royal, greater then Pan.

"Lo, I have seen; I go to my sheep,
Follow my footsteps through the snow,
But warily, warily see thou go,
For child and mother sleep."

Into the stable-yard Pan crept,
And there in a manger a baby lay
Beside his mother upon the hay,
And mother and baby slept.

Pan bent over the sleeping child,
Gazed on him, panting after his run:
And while he wondered, the little one
Opened his eyes and smiled;

Smiled, and after a little space
Struggled an arm from the swaddling-band,
And raising a tiny dimpled hand,
Patted the bearded face.

Something snapped in the breast of Pan;
His heart, his throat, his eyes were sore,
And he wished to weep as never before
Since the world began.

And out he went to the silly sheep,
To the fox on the hill, the fish in the sea,
The horse in the stall, the bird in the tree,
Asking them how to weep.

They could not teach—they did not know;
The law stands writ for the beast that's dumb
That a limb may ache and a heart be numb,
But never a tear can flow.

So bear you kindly to-day, O Man,
To all that is dumb and all that is wild,
For the sake of the Christmas Babe who smiled
In the eyes of great god Pan.

Frank Sidgwick

From "Some Verse" by Frank Sidgwick.
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MARCH OF THE THREE KINGS

This high-way
Beheld at break of day
Three Eastern Kings go by upon their journey.
This high-way
Beheld at break of day
Three Eastern Kings go by in rich array.
With courage high
All their guards passed by,
Their knights-at-arms with the squires and the pages.
With courage high
All their guards passed by,
With gilded armor shining like the sky.

Wondering then,
I watched the mighty men,
I stood amazed as the knights were passing.
Wondering then,
I watched the mighty men,
And as they passed I followed them again.
They journeyed far
To the guiding star
That shone where Jesus was lying in a manger.
And far away
Where the Christ Child lay
They found the shepherds come to watch and pray.

Gaspard old
Had brought a gift of gold.
He said, "My Lord, Thou art the King of Glory."
Gaspard old
Gave Christ his gift of gold,
And that this Child would conquer death, he told.
Then incense sweet
At the Christ Child's feet
King Melchior placed, saying, "Thou art God of armies."
Although He lies
Here in humble guise,
This little Child is God of earth and skies."

"You will die;
For You, my Lord, I cry,"
Wept Balthazar, his gifts of myrrh presenting.
"You will die
And in a tomb will lie,
For on a cross you will be lifted high."
All we to-day
To the Child must pray,
Who came to earth with His gifts of peace and blessing,
To Him we pray
And our homage pay
And with the Kings we march along the way.

Old Provençal Carol

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O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent hours go by.
Yet in thy dark street shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.
For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the Angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His Heaven.
No ear may hear His coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

Where children pure and happy
Pray to the blessed Child,
Where Misery cries out to Thee,
Son of the Mother mild.
Where Charity stands watching,
And Faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray!
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O, come to us, abide with us,
O Lord Emmanuel!

Phillips Brooks

THE SHEPHERD BOYS

The shepherd boys
Have met in their assembly.
The shepherd boys
Have thought what they should do.
When in their gathering each one had spoken
Telling his wish, they all boldly determined
To find
The King of all mankind.

So in a band
They set forth on their journey,
All in a band
In the wind and the storm.
For the brave shepherd lads reared in the mountains
Never are daunted by trouble or danger.
They go
And leave their homes below.

Our shepherds all
When it three o'clock sounded,
Our shepherds all
Have come there to the stall.
Hats in their hands they run now to the manger,
Hastening to bless and praise Mary the mother.
They bend
Before the child their friend.

They leave for him
Some cheese, their birthday present,
They leave for him
A full dozen of eggs.
Then Joseph said to them: "Be faithful shepherds,
Go whence you came and be safe on your journey.
Good men
Go to your home again."

Provençal Noël of Nicholas Saboly

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AN ANCIENT CHRISTMAS CAROL

He came all so still
    Where His mother was,
As dew in April
    That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
    Where His mother lay,
As dew in April
    That falleth on the spray.

He came all so still
    To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
    That falleth on the flower.

Mother and maiden
    Was never none but she!
Well might such a lady
    God's mother be.

Unknown.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Oh hush thee, little Dear-my-soul,
The evening shades are falling,—
Hush thee, my dear, dost thou not hear
The voice of the Master calling?

Deep lies the snow upon the earth,
But all the sky is ringing
With joyous song, and all night long
The stars shall dance with singing.

Oh hush thee, little Dear-my-soul,
And close thine eyes in dreaming,
And angels fair shall lead thee where
The singing stars are beaming.

A Shepherd calls His little lambs,
And He longeth to caress them;
He bids them rest upon His breast,
That His tender love may bless them.

So hush thee, little Dear-my-soul,
Whilst evening shades are falling,
And above the song of the heavenly throng
Thou shalt hear the Master calling.

Eugene Field

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CAROL

Mary, the mother, sits on the hill,
And cradles Child Jesu, that lies so still;
She cradles Child Jesu, that sleeps so sound,
And the little wind blows the song around.

The little wind blows the mother's words,
"Ei, Jesu, ei," like the song of birds;
"Ei, Jesu, ei," I heard it still,
As I lay asleep at the foot of the hill.

"Sleep, Babe, sleep, mother watch doth keep,
Ox shall not hurt Thee, nor ass, nor sheep;
Dew falls sweet from Thy Father's sky
Sleep, Jesu, sleep! ei, Jesu, ei."

Langdon E. Mitchell

LONG, LONG AGO

Winds thru the olive trees
Softly did blow,
Round little Bethlehem
Long, long ago.

Sheep on the hillside lay
Whiter than snow
Shepherds were watching them,
Long, long ago.

Then from the happy sky,
Angels bent low
Singing their songs of joy,
Long, long ago.

For in a manger bed,
Cradled we know,
Christ came to Bethlehem,
Long, long ago.

Unknown.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him,
And all the stars looked down.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Once a little baby lay
Cradled on the fragrant hay,
    Long ago on Christmas;
Stranger bed a babe ne'er found,
Wond'ring cattle stood around,
    Long ago on Christmas.

By the shining vision taught,
Shepherds for the Christ-child sought,
    Long ago on Christmas.
Guided in a starlit way.
Wise men came their gifts to pay,
    Long ago on Christmas.

And to-day the whole glad earth
Praises God for that Child's birth,
    Long ago on Christmas;
For the Life, the Truth, the Way
Came to bless the earth that day,
    Long ago on Christmas.

Emilie Poulsson

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP

Behold a little, tender Babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
Alas! a piteous sight.
The inns are full; no man will yield
This little Pilgrim bed;
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.

Weigh not his crib, his wooden dish,
Nor beasts that by him feed;
Weigh not his mother's poor attire,
Nor Joseph's simple weed.
This stable is a Prince's court,
The crib his chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liv'ries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heav'n;
This pomp is praised there.
With joy approach, O Christian wight!
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise this humble pomp,
Which he from Heav'n doth bring.

Robert Southwell

CHRISTMAS CAROL

Christ was born on Christmas day,
Wreathe the holly, twine the bay,
The Babe, the Son, the Holy One of Mary.
Light and life and joy is He,

He is born to set us free,
He is born our Lord to be;
Carol, Christians, joyfully;
The God, the Lord, by all adored forever.

Let the bright berries glow
Everywhere in goodly show,
Light and Life and joy is he,
The Babe, the Son, the Holy One of Mary.

Christian men, rejoice and sing;
'Tis the birthday of our King.
Carol, Christians, joyfully;
The God, the Lord,
By all adored forever.
Night of sadness,
Morn of gladness, evermore.
Ever, ever,
After many troubles sore,
Morn of gladness evermore, and evermore.
Midnight scarcely passed and over,
Drawing to the holy morn;
Very early, very early,
Christ was born.
Sing out with bliss,
His name is this:
Emmanuel!
As 'twas foretold,
In the days of old,
By Gabriel.

Thomas Helmore

A CHILD'S PRAYER
(*Ex Ore Infantum*)

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just as small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of THERE,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!

Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels, that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play CAN YOU SEE ME? through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands and pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew
The prayer not said unless we do.

And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Could'st Thou talk Thy Father's way?—
So, a little child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say: "O Father, I, Thy son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Hast not changed since Thou wast young!

Francis Thompson

AUNT MARY
(*A Christmas Chant*)

Now of all the trees by the king's highway,
    Which do you love the best?
O! the one that is green upon Christmas day,
    The bush with the bleeding breast.
Now the holly with her drops of blood for me;
For that is our dear Aunt Mary's tree.

Its leaves are sweet with our Saviour's name,
    'Tis a plant that loves the poor;
Summer and winter it shines the same,
    Beside the cottage door.
O! the holly with her drops of blood for me;
For that is our kind Aunt Mary's tree.

'Tis a bush that the birds will never leave;
    They sing in it all day long;
But sweetest of all on Christmas eve
    Is to hear the robins song.
'Tis the merriest sound upon earth and sea;
For it comes from our own Aunt Mary's tree.

So, of all that grow by the king's highway,
    I love that tree the best;
'Tis a bower for the birds upon Christmas day,
    The bush of the bleeding breast.
O! the holly with her drops of blood for me;
For that is our sweet Aunt Mary's tree.

Robert Stephen Hawker

THE CHRISTMAS TREES

There's a stir among the trees,
There's a whisper in the breeze,
Little ice-points clash and clink,
Little needles nod and wink,
Sturdy fir-trees sway and sigh—
"Here am I! Here am I!"

"All the summer long I stood
In the silence of the woods.
Tall and tapering I grew;
What might happen well I knew;
For one day a little bird
Sang, and in the song I heard
Many things quite strange to me
Of Christmas and the Christmas tree.

"When the sun was hid from sight
In the darkness of the night,
When the wind with sudden fret
Pulled at my green coronet,
Staunch I stood, and hid my fears,
Weeping silent fragrant tears,
Praying still that I might be
Fitted for a Christmas tree.

"Now here we stand
On every hand!
In us a hoard of summer stored,
Birds have flown over us,
Blue sky has covered us,
Soft winds have sung to us,
Blossoms have flung to us
Measureless sweetness,
Now in completeness
We wait."

Mary F. Butts

THE SONG OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Oho for the woods where I used to grow,
The home of the lonely owl and crow!
I spread my arms to shelter all
The creatures shy, both large and small.
I sang for joy to the friends I knew:
The sunshine, rain, and the sky so blue.
Oho for the forest! Oho for the hills!
Oho for the ripples of murmuring rills!
Oho, sing I, oho!

Oho for the hall where I now hold sway,
The home of the happy children gay!
I spread my arms with gifts for all,
From father big to baby small.
I sing for joy to these hearts that glow—
Of manger bed, and the Child we know.
Oho for the holly! Oho for the light!
Oho for the mistletoe's berries so white!
Oho, sing I, oho!

Blanche Elizabeth Wade

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine,
Christmas where snow-peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields lie sunny and bright,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,
Christmas where peace, like a dove in its flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight.
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all,
No palace too great and no cottage too small;
The angels who welcome Him sing from the height,
"In the City of David, a King in His might."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Then let every heart keep its Christmas within,
Christ's pity for sorrow, Christ's hatred for sin,
Christ's care for the weakest, Christ's courage for right,
Christ's dread of the darkness, Christ's love of the light,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

So the stars of the midnight which compass us round
Shall see a strange glory, and hear a sweet sound,
And cry, "Look! the earth is aflame with delight,
O sons of the morning, rejoice at the sight."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Phillips Brooks

WHILE STARS OF CHRISTMAS SHINE

While stars of Christmas shine,
    Lighting the skies,
Let only loving looks,
    Beam from our eyes.

While bells of Christmas ring,
    Joyous and clear,
Speak only happy words,
    All love and cheer.

Give only loving gifts,
    And in love take;
Gladden the poor and sad
    For love's dear sake.

Emilie Poulsson

STOCKING SONG ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Welcome Christmas! heel and toe,
Here we wait thee in a row.
Come, good Santa Claus, we beg
Fill us tightly, foot and leg.

Fill us quickly ere you go,—
Fill us till we overflow,
That's the way! and leave us more
Heaped in piles upon the floor.

Little feet that ran all day
Twitch in dreams of merry play,
Little feet that jumped at will
Lie all pink and white and still.

See us, how we lightly swing,
Hear us how we try to sing,
Welcome Christmas! heel and toe,
Come and fill us ere you go!

Here we hang till some one nimbly
Jumps with treasures down the chimney.
Bless us! how he'll tickle us!
Funny old Saint Nicholas.

Mary Mapes Dodge

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SING, SING FOR CHRISTMAS

Sing, sing for Christmas!
Welcome happy day!
For Christ is born our Saviour,
To take our sins away.
Sing, sing a joyful song,
Loud and clear to-day;
To praise our Lord and Saviour,
Who in the manger lay.

Tell, tell the story
Of the wondrous night,
When shepherds who were watching
Their flocks till morning light,
Saw angel hosts from heav'n,
Heard the angel voice,
And so were told the tidings
Which make the world rejoice.

Soft, softly shining,
Stars were in the sky,
And silver fell the moonlight
On hill and mountain high,
When suddenly the night
Outshone the bright mid-day,
With angel hosts who herald
The reign of peace for aye.

Hark, hear them singing,
Singing in the sky,
Of worship, honor, glory,
And praise to God on high!
Peace, peace, good-will to men!
Born the child from heaven!
The Christ, the Lord, the Saviour,
The Son to you is given!

Sing, sing for Christmas!
Echo, earth, the cry
Of worship, honor, glory,
And praise to God on high!
Sing, sing the joyful song,
Let it never cease,
Of glory in the highest,
On earth, good-will and peace.

J. H. Egar

CHRISTMAS SONG

Why do bells for Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?

Once a lovely, shining star,
Seen by shepherds from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger-cradle bright.

There a darling baby lay
Pillowed soft upon the hay.
And his mother sang and smiled,
"This is Christ, the holy child."

So the bells for Christmas ring,
So the little children sing.

Lydia Avery Coonley Ward

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CHRISTMAS IN THE HEART

It is Christmas in the mansion,
    Yule-log fires and silken frocks;
It is Christmas in the cottage,
    Mother's filling little socks.

It is Christmas on the highway,
    In the thronging, busy mart;
But the dearest truest Christmas
    Is the Christmas in the heart.

With wild surprise
Four great eyes
In two small heads
From neighboring beds
Looked out—and winked—
And glittered and blinked
At a very queer sight
In the dim dawn-light.
As plain as can be
A fairy tree
Flashes and glimmers
And shakes and shimmers.
Red, green, and blue
Meet their view;
Silver and gold
Sharp eyes behold;
Small moons, big stars;
And jams in jars,
And cakes, and honey,
And thimbles, and money,
Pink dogs, blue cats,
Little squeaking rats,
And candles, and dolls,
And crackers, and polls,
A real bird that sings,
And tokens and favors,
And all sorts of things
For the little shavers.

Four black eyes
Grow big with surprise:
And then grow bigger
When a tiny figure,
Jaunty and airy,
A fairy! a fairy!
From the tree-top cries,
"Open wide! Black Eyes!
Come, children, wake now!
Your joys you may take now!"

Quick as you can think
Twenty small toes
In four pretty rows,
Like little piggies pink,
All kick in the air—
And before you can wink
The tree stands bare!

Richard Watson Gilder

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A CAROL FOR TWELFTH DAY

Mark well my heavy doleful tale,
For Twelfth Day now is come,
And now I must no longer stay,
And say no word but mum.
For I perforce must take my leave
Of all my dainty cheer—
Plum porridge, roast beef, and minc'd-pies,
My strong ale and my beer.

Kind hearted Christmas, now adieu,
For I with thee must part;
But oh! to take my leave of thee
Doth grieve me at the heart.
Thou wert an ancient housekeeper,
And mirth with meat didst keep,
But thou art going out of town
Which causes me to weep.

Come, butler, fill a brimmer full,
To cheer my fainting heart,
That to old Christmas I may drink
Before he does depart.
And let each one that's in the room
With me likewise condole,
And now to cheer their spirits sad
Let each one drink a bowl.

And when the same it hath gone round,
Then fall unto your cheer;
For you well know that Christmas time
It comes but once a year.
Thanks to my master and my dame
That do such cheer afford,
God bless them, that each Christmas they
May furnish so their board.

Old English Carol

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